2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1949
FL11 Luo FL11

LUO TRIBES AND CLANS

by

E. E. Evans-Pritchard

In 1936 I had an opportunity, through the generosity of the Leverhulme Grants Committee, to spend a few weeks in Kenya. In the conditions then prevailing in that colony the Kenya Government considered it unwise for me to visit either the Masai or the Turkana, as had been my intention, so I decided that my time would be best employed in making a short survey of the Luo people, very little having been written about them and much of that of poor quality.[1]

Some six weeks were spent in Luoland. In view of the shortness of time at my disposal, made yet shorter by exceptionally severe fever, my enquiry was limited to certain features of Luo social organization. It was particularly directed towards a survey of political structure to discover how similar was Luo political structure to that of the Lango, Nuer, Anuak, and other Nilotic peoples. Some of the results of this survey are now recorded. They would have been published earlier had not the war prevented my giving any attention to anthropological studies. Statements made in this paper refer to 1936.

I had hoped that the Ven. Archdeacon W. E. Owen, who knew the Luo better than anyone has known them, would have read this article. The Archdeacon died in 1945. I am most grateful to him and to Mrs. Owen, for without their support I would certainly not have been able to make so rapid a survey. My thanks are also due to the many Luo who, largely out of regard for the Archdeacon and Mrs. Owen, assisted me in my enquiry.

The Luo of Kenya are a Nilotic people of some 500,000 souls bordering Lake Victoria Nyanza to the north and south of Kavirondo Gulf. Some outlying sections also stretch into Tanganyika. The parts of Luoland which lie back from the lake, e.g. Alego and Ugenya tribal areas, are undulating country in which the homesteads are built along the slopes (*thuce*, sing. *thur*, also meaning 'home') of the successive ridges. The country near the lake is less broken. The rainfall is everywhere heavy and well-distributed. The people are mainly agricultural, though they keep

[1] C.W. Hobley, 'Kavirondo', *The Geographical Journal*, 1898; Sir Harry Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Vol. II, Chap. XVIII, 1902; C. W. Hobley, 'Eastern Uganda', *Occasional Papers of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, No 1, 1902; G. A. S Northcote, 'The Nilotic Kavirondo', *J.R.A.I.* 1907; The Rev. N. Stam, 'The Religious Conceptions of the Kavirondo', *Anthropos*, 1910; C. M. Dobbs, 'Fishing in Kavirondo Gulf', *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.*, 1927; The Rev. H. Hartmann, 'Some Customs of the Luwo (or Nilotic Kavirondo) living in South Kavirondo', *Anthropos*, 1928; K. C. Shaw, 'Luo Marriage Customs' *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.* 1932; Archdeacon W. E. Owen, 'Food Production and kindred Matters amongst the Luo', *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.*, 1933.

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on which a *gunda*, homestead site, of one of them is situated ; but it means that he has a right to cultivate somewhere in that district. There is in this way an overlapping of rights in a territory.

Among the Luo ownership of agricultural land is vested in the lineage and every member of a lineage which owns an area has the right to cultivate in it. The individual has only rights of use, which are hereditary so long as the land is maintained in use ; but a man cannot sell the land, for his whole lineage and maybe other lineages as well have rights in it ; nor can he reclaim it if he has left it for some years and it is being cultivated by another man. Grazing land (*pap*) is always common. An individual can share his agricultural land with kinsmen, such as a daughter's husband or sister's son, and stranger lineages take root in the soil in the first instance through a personal tie of this kind. Sometimes a lineage of strangers flourish at the expense of the lineage whose forebears first gave permission to their ancestors to cultivate the soil and they begin to get a grip on the land and to count their graves and homestead sites in it. Or the lineage which owns the land increases and wants more land for its own members but finds that the land it wants is under cultivation by the descendants of strangers who now regard it as theirs by right and they begin to contest their occupation of it. They cannot directly challenge their use of the land nor just oust them from possession while they are using it, but they encroach on their cultivations and by constant pressure try to squeeze them out. The strangers have redress before European constituted courts but if they are weak they do not care to resort to them because they know that even if they win the case they must continue to live among their more powerful neighbours against whom they have proceeded. For such situations one cannot find rulings in past custom and when disputes of this kind occur to-day settlement depends on a variety of factors, the strength of the stranger lineages, their wealth, their influence with the chiefs and their ability to bribe them, and so forth.

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This paper is sketchy and the survey on which it is based was superficial. Those investigating the Luo at the present time will doubtless give a fuller, more accurate, and more balanced, account of their social organization. Nevertheless, the enquiry has served its limited purpose in that it has shown that Luo political structure with its lineage framework is in essential characteristics like that I have recorded for the Nuer. There are some differences, which I hope to discuss soon in a comparative study of Nilotic lineages as a contribution towards that study of lineage sy tem on a broader African and world-wide basis which research is slowly making possible. However, it may not prove easy to determine whether the differences are significant till an intensive study of the Luo has been made. All this paper claims to do is to show that the Luo have the same type of structure as the Nuer. Recent research has demonstrated that both Anuak and Shilluk have a lineage structure though it is

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1949
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114 combined with apical features in different forms of chieftainship and
171 kingship. On the other hand the Lango appear to have a lineage system like that of the Luo and are also like them an acephalous society. Unfortunately it is not possible to judge from Driberg's account how close is the resemblance between Luo and Lango lineages or what is the political function of the Lango lineage, and further research would be required before the Lango can be placed on the basis of this feature in a typological series of the Nilotic peoples.

3: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1950 FL11 Luo FL11

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF THE LUO OF KENYA

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

THIS paper forms part of a short general account of the Luo based on a rapid survey made in 1936. The survey was financed by the Leverhulme Grants Committee. An earlier part, describing the political structure of the Luo, has recently appeared in another journal.[1]

Apart from information provided by Father Hartmann[2] and a fuller account by Mr. K. C. Shaw,[3] early accounts of Luo marriage are slight, and in some cases misleading. Mr. Shaw's account covers a good part of the ground covered by the present paper, but it is useful to have two independent accounts, especially as both were written from information obtained through interpreters. When I went to Kenya I did not expect to visit the Luo and I had not therefore read Mr. Shaw's article. Mr. Shaw and I disagree in a number of particulars in the overlapping parts of our papers. It does not follow from this that either of us is wrong in our statements because, as Mr. Shaw points out, there is some variation in local custom in the different tribes of Luoland. My own information on this particular subject was mostly obtained from the Alego tribe of Central Kavirondo. In the main I have followed the account given me by Pastor Ezekiel of that tribe. In doing so I have omitted much detail.

Simba

Courtship and marriage are intimately connected with the custom of making love to girls (*cudo*) in the *simba* or bachelors' dormitory, the hut nearest to the entrance to a Luo homestead. Youths arrange with girls to visit them there at night, and when a youth is visited by one of his sweethearts the other young men of the home sleep elsewhere. He plays with the girl and has intercourse between her thighs and they sleep together. He must not penetrate her—that is regarded as shameful, and it will be known on the day of her marriage. If a girl comes from a distance to visit her lover she may spend several nights with him in the *simba*. A girl may have several lovers in different homesteads whom she visits from time to time; she pleases herself in these matters. The young men will not quarrel about her, nor will her father and brothers interfere in her love affairs. She may continue the practice throughout the stages of her marriage to another man right up to the *rite*, the final ceremony of marriage. I was told that a girl does not usually visit the *simba* more often than once or twice a month. Occasionally the lover employs a harpist to entertain the girl and his friends on one of her visits, and there is singing and dancing. Between the songs youths, and sometimes girls also, stand up and boast of their virtues, of the number of their friends and sweethearts, of their wealth, and of their families and lineages; and when they have finished they throw a gift to the harpist, maybe to-day a shilling. Other youths then try to outdo them in boasts and generosity.

[1] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'Luo Tribes and Clans', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 1949.

[2] H. Hartmann, 'Some Customs of the Lwoo (or Nilotic Kavirondo) living in South Kavirondo', *Anthropos*, 1928.

[3] K. C. Shaw, 'Some Preliminary Notes on Luo Marriage Customs', *J.E.A. & U.N.H.S.*, 1932.

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11

BRITISH EAST AFRICA.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES IN KAVIRONDO AND NANDI.

By C. W. Hobley, Assoc. M. Inst. C.E., and Assistant Deputy Commissioner, E.A. Protectorate.

[With Plates XXVIII–XXX.]

114 This paper contains the results of a more minute research into the habits and beliefs of the people already dealt with in a previous publication of the Institute.[1] The term Eastern Uganda, as applied to this area, is, however, no longer correct, as since the date of that publication, the Eastern Province of Uganda has been transferred, and is now known as the Kisumu Province of the East Africa Protectorate.

When compiling my former work, I had no idea that such an amount of material still remained to be recorded, and, consequently, I was equally surprised to find that so much more existed; I venture, therefore, to hope that my researches may furnish students of the science, who have no opportunity of visiting these countries, with some information worth their consideration.

The disappointing feature in researches of this nature, to the observer in the field, is that no reason is obtainable from the people themselves for the existence of many of their strange customs, but I have no doubt that anthropologists in Europe, with their advantages of a wide range of comparative study, will see daylight where the local observer, with his limited vision, flounders in darkness when he tries to work back and find the origin of some custom, now a mere relic of its former self.

115 In the collection of the information embodied in this paper, I have been greatly indebted to several intelligent natives who are employed in traversing the country from end to end, superintending the collection of the hut tax, and who, in pursuance of their duty, visit, during the course of the year, practically every village. These men, I found, took a great natural interest in enquiring into any strange rite or ceremony they incidentally met with in the course of their peregrinations. I have also encouraged chiefs and others whom I have met to talk of their beliefs, etc., and, in most cases, their usual reticence to discuss such matters with a European can soon be overcome.

[1] *Occasional Papers*, No. 1, "Eastern Uganda," by C. W. Hobley.

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11

I must also express my indebtedness to [illegible]. Mayes, Collector of Nandi, for much information regarding that tribe, [illegible] particularly uncommunicative on these matters.

I have no doubt that, as y[illegible]many of the matters dealt with herein may become much clearer, bu[illegible] thought it best to publish the material without further delay, as it may help to stimulate further research, and I also fear that as civilization develops, many of the strange customs and legends may become lost; in fact, there are already signs that the younger generation of natives are losing interest in the old order of things.

LEGENDS OF THE ORIGIN OF THE JA-LUO RACE.

Many savage tribes have legends or myths to account for their origin, and I believe I am correct in stating that, in Africa, it is generally among those of Bantu origin that such myths are found. However, in the whole of the country in the vicinity of the east side of the Nyanza, with which I am fairly well acquainted, with one exception, no trace of a definite legend has been discovered among the Bantu tribes (the exception being the Kadimu belief that their common ancestor was a huge python). Among the Ja-Luo, however, there is a very wide-spread belief in one Apŏdtho, who was the Adam of the comparatively limited area of which these people have any cognizance.

I venture to give three versions of the same myth taken down from three chiefs living some forty miles apart. Each of these authorities also gave me a genealogical tree of considerable interest, inasmuch as they contain what may be a very probable solution of the origin of the names of the Ja-Luo tribes in Kavirondo. Of course there are discrepancies, but when one considers the way this story and the genealogical tables have been handed down verbally from generation to generation, one wonders that the three versions present so many features in common.

Version I from Uganda chief of Usukwa.

Apŏdtho was the father of all the Kavirondo people. He descended from the heavens, and the day he reached the earth, the various kinds of animals also came down from above.

Apŏdtho descended on Ramogi, or Lamogi, Hill, a long way north of Uganda, and he afterwards died at the same place. He descended with one woman, whose name is forgotten, and by her he had two sons and four daughters. These sons were named Ramogi and Anyango, and each married two of his sisters.

Ramogi migrated southward, and came and settled on a hill in Kadimu country (near the mouth of the river Nzoia); this hill is called after him to this day. His offspring founded the Ja-Luo race; most of the names of his sons being the names of the various tribes which were founded by them.

Anyango, the other son of Apŏdtho, stayed in the country of his father and became the progenitor of the Baganda and Banyoro. On the day that Apŏdtho

775 He goes straight to the hut of the *pim*, the old woman
783 of the home, and there a goat is thumped and kicked to death. Afterwards it is skinned and cut open. The heart is extracted and bits of it are put by the *jagut* to the lips of the slayer and of some of his companions. He cuts strips from the skin of the goat and lays them along the backs of the slayer's fingers. He also gives the slayer medicines, among them a wild pig's tusk, which the slayer wears round his neck. The man is now purified and may drink milk again. [114] Roscoe's account is very different from that given to me by Luo, which I have recounted above.

775 Clearly there is much more to be discovered about Luo beliefs about ghosts than what I have recorded, but I can only add to my account that the word *jociendi* is sometimes used for ghosts in general—and not with special reference to troublesome ghosts—and that some ghosts appear to be thought to become nature spirits dwelling in water and in the air, and others to occupy the gourds used by diviners and to answer questions the diviners put to them.

[p. 87b]

17: Southall E-5 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11

originate all the larger lineages which provide the political framework of Luo society.

My illustrations of Luo lineage structure are taken from material on one large lineage group, that of Karachuonyo. This group inhabits the present locations of Karachuonyo and Kanjpul, and in 1947 had a population of 90,000. I lived here from December 1946 till March 1947 and again for the month of September 1947. On each occasion I took with me a Luo student from Makerere College as interpreter and research assistant. I went through my material with a dozen or more of the Luo students at Makerere who themselves came from a number of different locations. Clearly, from such a short period in the field, my results are not complete, but in so far as they add to the information at present available, I present them for what they are worth. The map (Fig. 5) shows all the Luo locations of South Kavirondo, those of the Karachuonyo group and of the other lineages which claim descent from the common ancestors, Jook and his wife Awandu, being shown in heavy type.

III. THE FAMILY

THE most prominent cultural features of the Luo landscape are the euphorbia hedges, at stages of growth varying from that of 3-foot saplings to that of 30-foot trees, dating each site by their planting at the time of first occupation, and throwing a thick green wall round the cluster of huts within. This residential unit is the *dala* or *pacho*, and will be referred to as the homestead. The dwelling-huts ranged in a circle round the inside of the hedge are those of married women, the chief wife's hut being at the side opposite to the entrance through the hedge, and the huts of subsequent wives arranged in alternate succession on either side of that of the chief wife.[1] The husband and head of the homestead divides his time between the huts of his wives, the chief wife's hut taking precedence,[2] having no other quarters of his own except an *abila*, a smaller hut usually in the centre of the circle, which was his only place of privacy. There is a belief that if the husband leaves the homestead to escape from the bickering of his wives he will die on re-entering it, and the *abila* provides him with a safer sanctuary. It was also a vantage point from which he could keep a watchful eye on his cattle in the nearby kraal. The homestead is the spatial correlate of the compound polygynous family and is subdivided into the households of its component elementary families. Just as *dala* or *pacho* applies both figuratively to the social group and concretely to the homestead occupied by it, so *ot* applies both to house and to the household of wife and children occupying it. The title of the head of the homestead and its family group is *nyuon dala* or *nyuon pacho*; *jadwong* (elder) may be substituted for *nyuon*. Correspondingly, each wife is *nyuon ot*, signifying that she is head of the household, proprietress of its hut and all other effects, and leader of its domestic and economic activities. The word *nyuon* is usually translated as 'father', and is in fact the classificatory term for all agnates of the generation senior to the speaker, including the 'genitor'. But its use with reference to all married women,

[1] See Gluckman in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, ed. Radcliffe-Brown and Forde. The Luo family has a 'home-property complex' of the Zulu type but in a less extreme form.

[2] This is often nothing to stand. The husband's most valuable possessions are also kept there. With the present changes in hut design the chief wife's hut is often of the new and more pretentious rectangular pattern, while a second wife's may also be rectangular but smaller, and the third wife's still of the traditional circular type.

18: Allison et al. D-5 (1949) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11
Kikuyu FL10

I.—Blood Groups in some Kenya Tribes

By A. C. Allison, *Department of Anatomy, University of Oxford*, Elizabeth W. Ikin *and* A. E. Mourant, *both of the Blood Group Reference Laboratory (Medical Research Council), Lister Institute, London.*

L K 114 143

This communication embodies the results of A_1A_2BO, MNS, and Rh tests on the Luo and Kikuyu tribes of Kenya, together with P tests on the Kikuyu and ABO tests on the Masai. The specimens were collected as part of the anthropological investigation carried out while one author (A.C.A.) was a member of the Oxford University Mount Kenya Expedition, 1949.

The only previous anthropological blood group study carried out in this area is the work of Elsdon-Dew (1939) on the ABO groups of some East African native populations.

L K 144

The Luo and Kikuyu are two of the largest tribes in the country and although neither is "racially pure" they differ in language and custom and are generally believed to differ in origin. The Luo may be taken as representative of the Nilotic group and the Kikuyu of the Eastern Bantu.

L K 125 143

The subjects were hospital patients and groups of labourers, the Luo from Nairobi and Nakuru districts, the Kikuyu from Nairobi, Kiambu and Embu districts. Individuals who were tested were unrelated to one another and were not aware of having any forebears from other tribes. Specimens were taken in the form of clotted blood by means of "Venules" and sent by air to London. Specimens were taken without mishap or complication from 128 Luo and 124 Kikuyu. Specimens were also taken from a further 61 Luo and 111 Kikuyu, but owing to an unsatisfactory system of labelling became mixed in transit. As will be shown below, the Luo and the Kikuyu differ little in their blood group frequencies and the mixed specimens differ little from either of the pure batches. Moreover, the total number of

[p. 55b]

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
FL11 Luo FL11

FOREWORD

THIS work was done during the period in which Mr. Ominde was a student at Makerere College. The practical investigations were made in successive vacations, and Mr. Ominde had what advice I could give him in connection with these. He was able to approach his field of studies with the great advantage of experience derived from his own childhood upbringing coupled with the maturity and detachment required as a student, and this has enabled him to produce a work of real value despite the fact that he had little chance for a full study of scientific techniques before he began his work, and that he could not spend nearly as long in the field as he would have liked or the subject merited. By his clear statement of the conditions, methods and limitations under which his research was carried out he has ensured its value as a reliable contribution to knowledge in a field where it is badly needed.

It is to be hoped that he will himself be able to continue the work that he has begun in this promising way, and that his example will encourage others to do likewise in this and similar fields.

A. W. SOUTHALL

MAKERERE COLLEGE

[p. vi is blank]

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
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INTRODUCTION

This piece of work is the result of a survey carried out in Nyahera among Luo people living round the African Inland Mission, seven miles north-west of the township of Kisumu. This investigation has provided a basis from which generalizations could be made by comparing the conditions in this locality with those in other parts of the Luo country.

Superstitions—beliefs in magic and the work of spirits—are common among the Luo people; and it appears to me that any differences in the conditions existing in various localities can be attributed to the extent to which Christian influence and economic pressure have modified the people's beliefs and manner of life.

Local differences may also be due to customs acquired from the numerous tribes contacted by the Luo in their migration. Remnants of these customs and social practices may still be found in the assimilated tribal groups.

This investigation originated from a desire to study the social development of a Luo girl. I have therefore put forward such information as I think might interest anyone engaged in educational work among the people of this tribe. I hope too that it may interest students in attempting to solve problems which would further the advance of education and broaden the outlook of parents in relation to their children.

The material put forward leaves an enormous field for comparison, criticism, and independent investigation by serious students of Luo society. The nature of the problems dealt with may also make the information appear fragmentary; but I have attempted, within the serious limitations involved; to provide a structure on which